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2004 USMLE™

bulletin of information

A Joint Program of
the Federation of State Medical
Boards of the United States, Inc.,
and the National Board of Medical Examiners®

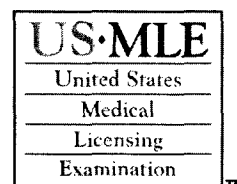


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OVERVIEW

Introduction

The United States Medical Licensing Examination™ (USMLE™) is a three-step examination for medical licensure in the United States and is sponsored by the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) and the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME).

The Composite Committee, appointed by the FSMB and NBME, establishes rules for the USMLE program. Membership includes representatives from the following:

- ☐ FSMB,
- ☐ NBME,
- ☐ Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG®),
- ☐ American public.

Note: You must become familiar with the information in this bulletin if you are an applicant with an eligibility period that has an ending date in 2004. Eligibility periods are explained on page 12. To apply for the USMLE, you must contact the appropriate registration entity (see page 26).

Changes in the USMLE program may occur after the release of this bulletin. If changes occur, information will be posted on the USMLE website. You must obtain the most recent information to ensure an accurate understanding of current USMLE rules.

<http://www.usmle.org>
Visit the USMLE website for
up-to-date information.

Purpose of the USMLE

In the United States and its territories, the individual medical licensing authorities ("state medical boards") of the various jurisdictions grant a license to practice medicine. Each medical licensing authority sets its own rules and regulations and requires passing an examination that demonstrates qualification for licensure. Results of the USMLE are reported to these authorities

for use in granting the initial license to practice medicine. The USMLE provides them with a common evaluation system for applicants for medical licensure.

The USMLE assesses a physician's ability to apply knowledge, concepts, and principles, and to demonstrate fundamental patient-centered skills, that are important in health and disease and that constitute the basis of safe and effective patient care. Each of the three Steps complements the others; no Step can stand alone in the assessment of readiness for medical licensure. Because individual medical licensing authorities make decisions regarding use of USMLE results, you should contact the jurisdiction where you intend to apply for licensure to obtain complete information. Also, the FSMB can provide general information on medical licensure.

See pages 26 and 27–32 for information on how to contact the FSMB and medical licensing authorities.

The Three Steps of the USMLE

Step 1 assesses whether you understand and can apply important concepts of the sciences basic to the practice of medicine, with special emphasis on principles and mechanisms underlying health, disease, and modes of therapy. Step 1 ensures mastery of not only the sciences that provide a foundation for the safe and competent practice of medicine in the present, but also the scientific principles required for maintenance of competence through lifelong learning.

Step 2 assesses whether you can apply medical knowledge, skills, and understanding of clinical science essential for the provision of patient care under supervision and includes emphasis on health promotion and disease prevention. Step 2 ensures that due attention is devoted to principles of clinical sciences and basic patient-centered skills that provide the foundation for the safe and competent practice of medicine.

Step 3 assesses whether you can apply medical knowledge and understanding of biomedical and clinical science essential for the unsupervised practice of medicine, with emphasis on patient management in ambulatory settings. Step 3 provides a final

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assessment of physicians assuming independent responsibility for delivering general medical care.

Examination Committees

Examination committees composed of medical educators and clinicians prepare the examination materials. Committee members broadly represent the teaching, practicing, and licensing communities across the United States. At least two of these committees critically appraise each test item or case. They revise or discard any materials that are in doubt.

Ownership and Copyright of Examination Materials

The USMLE parent organizations, the FSMB and NBME, own the examination materials used in the USMLE. The examinations are copyrighted. If you reproduce and/or distribute any examination materials, by any means, including memorizing and reconstructing them, without explicit written permission from the parent organizations, you violate the rights of the FSMB and NBME. In addition to actions described on page 25, the FSMB and the NBME will use every legal means available to protect USMLE copyrighted materials and secure redress against those who violate copyright law.

USMLE Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS) Examination

A clinical skills examination was part of the original design of USMLE. The NBME was charged with including a test of clinical skills using standardized patients when such an examination was shown to be valid, reliable, and practical. NBME research and the work of other organizations administering clinical skills examinations demonstrate that clinical skills examinations measure skill sets different from those measured by traditional multiple-choice questions. Mastery of clinical and communication skills, as well as cognitive skills, by individuals seeking medical licensure is important to the protection of the public.

Implementation of the clinical skills examination will occur in the second or third quarter of 2004. The clinical skills examination will be a separate component of Step 2, and will be referred to as Step 2 Clinical Skills, or Step 2 CS. The current Step 2 will be referred to as the Clinical Knowledge Component, or Step 2 CK.

In order to be eligible to register for USMLE Step 3, students and graduates of LCME- or AOA-accredited medical schools will be required to not only meet current examination requirements (i.e., passing Step 1 and passing Step 2 CK) but also to pass Step 2 CS if they: (a) have graduation dates in 2005 or later, or (b) have graduation dates prior to 2005 and have not passed the CK component of Step 2 taken on or before June 30, 2005.

When Step 2 CS is implemented, it will replace the Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA*) administered by the ECFMG and required for ECFMG certification of international medical graduates.

In order to be eligible to register for USMLE Step 3, international medical graduates will be required to not only meet current requirements (i.e., passing Step 1 and Step 2 CK and being certified by ECFMG), but also to pass Step 2 CS. However, international medical graduates who have passed the ECFMG CSA will not be required to pass Step 2 CS to register for USMLE Step 3.

To be eligible to register for Step 3, ECFMG-certified international medical graduates who have not passed the ECFMG CSA, as well as individuals who successfully complete a "Fifth Pathway" program, may also be required to pass Step 2 CS. These individuals should monitor the USMLE website for the effective date of this requirement.

You are responsible for determining whether this requirement applies to you, based on the rules stated in the paragraphs above.

This bulletin is written to include information available at the time of publication regarding the CS component of Step 2. As additional information about the implementation of Step 2 CS becomes available, details will be provided at the USMLE and your registration entity's websites.

Computer-Based Testing (CBT)

Parts of the USMLE are administered by computer. Prometric®, part of The Thomson Corporation, provides scheduling and test centers for the USMLE. Step 1 and Step 2 Clinical Knowledge Component are given around the world at Prometric Test Centers (PTCs). Step 3 is given at PTCs in the United States and its territories.

ELIGIBILITY

Step 1, Step 2 CK, and Step 2 CS

To be eligible, you must be in one of the following categories at the time of application and on the test day:

- ☐ a medical student officially enrolled in, or a graduate of, a US or Canadian medical school program leading to the MD degree that is accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME),
- ☐ a medical student officially enrolled in, or a graduate of, a US medical school program leading to the DO degree that is accredited by the American Osteopathic Association (AOA),
- ☐ a medical student officially enrolled in, or a graduate of, a medical school outside the United States and Canada and eligible for examination by the ECFMG for its certificate.

Step 3

To be eligible for Step 3, prior to submitting your application, you must

- ☐ meet the Step 3 requirements set by the medical licensing authority to which you are applying,
- ☐ obtain the MD degree (or its equivalent) or the DO degree,
- ☐ pass Step 1, Step 2 CK, Step 2 CS (if required based upon rules referenced on page 2), and
- ☐ obtain certification by the ECFMG or successfully complete a "Fifth Pathway" program if you are a graduate of a medical school outside the United States and Canada.

Note: A physician whose basic medical degree or qualification was conferred by a medical school outside the United States and Canada may be eligible for certification by the ECFMG if the medical school and graduation year are listed in the *International Medical Education Directory* (IMED) of the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER®). This applies to citizens of the United States who have completed their medical education in schools outside the United States and Canada, but not to foreign nationals who have graduated from medical schools in the United States and Canada. Specific eligibility criteria for students and graduates of medical schools outside the United States and Canada to take Step 1 and Step 2 are described in the *Information Booklet* provided by the ECFMG.

Application and other requests for services will not be processed if it is determined that doing so would be violative of any applicable federal laws or regulations.

Note: The USMLE program recommends that for Step 3 eligibility, licensing authorities require the completion, or near completion, of at least one postgraduate training year in a program of graduate medical education accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) or the AOA. You should contact the FSMB or the individual licensing authority (see pages 26–32) for complete information on Step 3 eligibility requirements in the state where you plan to seek licensure.

ELIGIBILITY

Note: A "Fifth Pathway" program* is an academic year of supervised clinical education provided by an LCME-accredited medical school and is available to persons who meet all of the following conditions:

- A. Have completed, in an accredited US college or university, undergraduate premedical work of the quality acceptable for matriculation in an LCME-accredited US medical school;
- B. Have studied medicine in a medical school located outside the United States and Canada that is listed in the *International Medical Education Directory* (IMED) of the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER®), and that requires an internship and/or social service after completing the school's academic requirements and before receiving the final medical credential;
- C. Have completed all of the formal requirements of the non-US medical school except internship and/or social service. (Those who have completed all of these requirements for graduation are not eligible.)

Students who have completed the academic curriculum in residence at a non-US medical school and who meet the above conditions may be offered the opportunity to substitute, for an internship and/or social service required by a non-US medical school, an academic year of supervised clinical training in a medical school accredited by the LCME.

Any medical school accredited by the LCME can provide "Fifth Pathway" education. As of the release of this bulletin, the only medical schools known to provide such education are New York Medical College in Valhalla, New York, and Ponce School of Medicine in Ponce, Puerto Rico.

*Source: *GMED Companion: An Insider's Guide to Selecting a Residency Program, 2002/2003*, American Medical Association.

Graduates of Unaccredited Medical Schools in the United States and Canada

If you are eligible for licensure by a medical licensing authority but are **not** in one of the eligibility categories listed on page 3, you may take the USMLE only upon specific request by that medical licensing authority. A licensing authority may sponsor you to take Step 1 and Step 2, followed by Step 3 if Step 1 and Step 2 are passed, if all of the following conditions apply to you:

- ☐ You are a graduate of an unaccredited medical school in the United States or Canada.
- ☐ You are an applicant for initial medical licensure in the jurisdiction of the sponsoring licensing authority.
- ☐ The sponsoring licensing authority certifies that you have met all of the requirements for licensure in the jurisdiction except for the examination requirement.

If these conditions apply to you, the medical licensing authority should submit the request to sponsor you to the USMLE Secretariat at the address shown on page 27 in advance of your application for the Step.

Sequence of Steps

Once eligibility requirements are met (see page 3), students and graduates of LCME- and AOA-accredited medical schools may take Step 1, Step 2 CK, and Step 2 CS in any sequence.

Students and graduates of medical schools outside the United States and Canada must pass Step 1 before registering for Step 2 CS.

ELIGIBILITY

Time Limit and Number of Attempts Allowed to Complete All Steps

Although there is no limit on the total number of times you can retake a Step you have not passed, the USMLE program recommends to medical licensing authorities that they

- ☐ require the dates of passing the Step 1, Step 2, and Step 3 examinations to occur within a seven-year period; and
- ☐ allow no more than six attempts to pass each Step examination without demonstration of additional educational experience acceptable to the medical licensing authority.

If you pass a Step, you are not allowed to retake it, except to comply with the time limit of a medical licensing authority for the completion of all Steps or a requirement imposed by another authority recognized by the USMLE program for this purpose. The medical licensing or other authority must provide information indicating that you are applying to retake the passed Step in order to comply with its requirement. If you are repeating a Step because of a time limit, you may apply to retake the Step only after the applicable time limit has expired, except if your current educational program leading to the award of the MD or DO degree will not be completed until seven or more years after you initially passed your first Step and you are otherwise eligible to retake the Step.

The number of attempts allowed to pass each Step and the time allowed to complete all Steps vary among jurisdictions. To obtain specific information, you should contact the medical licensing authority in the jurisdiction where you intend to apply for medical licensure or the FSMB.

See pages 26 and 27–32 for information on how to contact the FSMB and medical licensing authorities.

Formerly Administered Examinations

The NBME certifying examinations, Part I, Part II, and Part III, and the Federation Licensing Examination (FLEX) Components 1 and 2 are no longer administered. Use of the former NBME Parts or FLEX Components to fulfill eligibility requirements for Step 3 is no longer accepted. If you have passed all or a portion of these examinations and have never been granted a medical license by a US medical licensing authority, you may take any Step(s) for which you are otherwise eligible.

Retakes

If you fail or do not complete a Step and want to retake it, you must reapply by submitting a new application and fee. You may take the failed or incomplete Step no more than three times within a 12-month period.

No Step may be taken sooner than 60 days after your previous test date. For Step 1 and Step 2 CK, you may retake the Step no earlier than the first day of the month that begins at least 60 days after your previous test date. When you reapply to retake Step 3, the FSMB will assign an eligibility period to you that begins no earlier than 60 days after your previous test dates. Details on the retake policies for Step 2 CS will be provided on the USMLE website and the website of your registration entity.

Note: *Eligibility periods are explained on page 12. To apply for the USMLE, you must contact the appropriate registration entity (see page 26).*

Change in Eligibility Status

If your eligibility for a Step changes after you submit your application but before your scheduled test date(s), you must notify your registration entity promptly. Failure to notify your registration entity that you may no longer be eligible to take the Step may result in a determination of irregular behavior (see page 24). If you take a Step for which you are not eligible, scores for that Step will not be reported or, if previously reported, will be revoked.

EXAMINATION CONTENT

Step 1

Step 1 includes test items in the following content areas:

- ☐ anatomy,
- ☐ behavioral sciences,
- ☐ biochemistry,
- ☐ microbiology,
- ☐ pathology,
- ☐ pharmacology,
- ☐ physiology,
- ☐ interdisciplinary topics, such as nutrition, genetics, and aging.

Step 1 is a broadly based, integrated examination. Test items commonly require you to perform one or more of the following tasks:

- ☐ Interpret graphic and tabular material.
- ☐ Identify gross and microscopic pathologic and normal specimens.
- ☐ Apply basic science knowledge to clinical problems.

Step 1 classifies test items along two dimensions, system and process, as shown at the right.

<http://www.usmle.org>

Sample Step 1 test materials and further information on Step 1 test content are available from your registration entity and at the USMLE website.

Table 1: USMLE Step 1 Specifications*

System**

40%–50%	General principles
50%–60%	Individual organ systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hematopoietic/lymphoreticular • nervous/special senses • skin/connective tissue • musculoskeletal • respiratory • cardiovascular • gastrointestinal • renal/urinary • reproductive • endocrine

Process

30%–50%	Normal structure and function
30%–50%	Abnormal processes
15%–25%	Principles of therapeutics
10%–20%	Psychosocial, cultural, occupational and environmental considerations

* Percentages may be changed without notice.

** The general principles category includes test items concerning those normal and abnormal processes that are not limited to specific organ systems. Categories for individual organ systems include test items concerning those normal and abnormal processes that are system specific.

EXAMINATION CONTENT

Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK)

Step 2 CK includes test items in the following content areas:

- ☐ internal medicine,
- ☐ obstetrics and gynecology,
- ☐ pediatrics,
- ☐ preventive medicine,
- ☐ psychiatry,
- ☐ surgery,
- ☐ other areas relevant to provision of care under supervision.

Most Step 2 CK test items describe clinical situations and require that you provide one or more of the following:

- ☐ a diagnosis,
- ☐ a prognosis,
- ☐ an indication of underlying mechanisms of disease,
- ☐ the next step in medical care, including preventive measures.

Step 2 CK is a broadly based, integrated examination. It frequently requires interpretation of tables and laboratory data, imaging studies, photographs of gross and microscopic pathologic specimens, and results of other diagnostic studies. Step 2 CK classifies test items along two dimensions: disease category and physician task, as shown at the right.

Please note that much of the content that addresses normal growth and development and general principles of care is also related to the individual organ systems categories, so that the number of questions that deal solely with normal growth and development and general principles of care is relatively small.

<http://www.usmle.org>

Sample Step 2 CK test materials and further information on Step 2 CK test content are available from your registration entity and at the USMLE website.

Table 2: USMLE Step 2 CK Specifications*

Normal Conditions and Disease Categories

- ☐ Normal growth and development and general principles of care
- ☐ Individual organ systems or types of disorders
 - immunologic disorders
 - diseases of the blood and blood-forming organs
 - mental disorders
 - diseases of the nervous system and special senses
 - cardiovascular disorders
 - diseases of the respiratory system
 - nutritional and digestive disorders
 - gynecologic disorders
 - renal, urinary, and male reproductive systems
 - disorders of pregnancy, childbirth, and the puerperium
 - disorders of the skin and subcutaneous tissue
 - diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue
 - endocrine and metabolic disorders

Physician Task

- 15%–20% Promoting preventive medicine and health maintenance
- 20%–35% Understanding mechanisms of disease
- 25%–40% Establishing a diagnosis
- 15%–25% Applying principles of management

* Percentages may be changed without notice.